



Process at a glance

Minister of Word and Sacrament

Updated November 2023

This document can illuminate the journey to Ministry of Word and Sacrament. This is an aid only. Please consult the CPM policies and procedures manual available on the Presbytery website for the most accurate information on the process.

Applying to Enter Discernment

- **Read the CPM Policies and Procedures Manual and the PC(USA) Handbook on Preparation for Ministry**

These two documents provide insight on the preparation process locally and nationally. These will be the primary references for your discernment and preparation process as you work with the CPM.

- **Start your application packet**

Available on baltimorepresbytery.org. Start by filling out the first two forms (1A and 1B) in the packet.

- **Meet with the Session of your congregation**

On the final form of your application packet (1D), the Session will certify that they have examined you and endorse your entrance into the inquiry phase of the discernment and preparation process. This also serves as a release of information agreement so that the CPM can communicate with the Session.

- **Connect with your Session liaison**

The Session will assign you a congregational liaison who will help facilitate support, connection, and care for you while in the process.

- **Explore theological education and graduate M.Div. programs**

You do not need to be accepted to a graduate program prior to applying, but you will need to complete information about financing your theological education (1C). The CPM page has a link to help you explore Presbyterian seminaries.

- **Send your application and meet with the CPM**

Send the completed packet to the chair of the CPM. At your first meeting with the commission, members will get to know you, review your application, discuss your reflection questions, and enroll you under care.

- **Initiate a background check**

The CPM conducts a background check (including criminal and motor vehicle) for all enrolling in the process. The cost is covered by CPM.

- **Complete Forms 2A and 2B**

These two forms document an individual's entry into the discernment and preparation process.

- **Enrollment by the CPM**

The CPM enrolls the individual as an Inquirer and establishes an account with the Office of the General Assembly. You will register for exams with this account.

The Inquiry Phase

- **Connect with your CPM liaison**

The CPM assigns every individual under care at least one liaison who will help guide and support you through the discernment and preparation process. They serve as a primary point of contact with the CPM. You should plan on speaking to your liaison on a regular basis (often once a quarter).

- **Begin your graduate program**

If you have not already done so, you will begin an M.Div. program at an approved graduate institution. Transcripts should be sent to the CPM every year.

- **Schedule a Vocational and Psychological Assessment**

During the inquiry stage, your vocational and psychological assessment provides deeper insight to support discernment and exploration of vocational ministry. The CPM covers one third of this cost, with the remainder of the fee left to you and your congregation.

- **Pass the Biblical Content Exam (BCE)**

The Biblical Content Exam (BCE) is the first, most foundational exam that is required of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament. It is administered several times a year online and proctored in-person in a wide range of cities and locations.



• Annual Consultations

Each year, every person under care of the Presbytery will meet with the CPM to reflect on their sense of call, preparation, and overall journey. Each enrollee needs to complete Form 3 at least a week prior to the consultation.

The individual's liaison should complete Form 4 in consultation with the commission. This form outlines specific goals for the inquirer or candidate that they should meet in the coming year.

• Complete reflection assignments

You will need to complete three reflections: (1) an anti-racism reflection; (2) a reflection on the role of a Minister of Word and Sacrament; and (3) a spiritual autobiography that explores your sense of call and faith journey.

• Complete Presbytery training

The Presbytery requires Healthy Boundaries and Dismantling Racism training for all individuals in the inquirer phase. These are offered on a semi-regular basis.

• Prepare a preliminary statement of faith

Your statement of faith does not need to be as comprehensive or theologically-informed as the one that will be submitted at your final examination by the Presbytery.

Progressing to Candidacy

• Complete the candidacy application packet

The packet is available on the Presbytery website and will include additional reflection.

• Meet with the Session of your congregation for a second endorsement

They will complete the second form (5D) in your application packet to progress to candidacy and authorizes the release of information.

• Meet with the CPM for your candidacy interview

At this meeting, the CPM will focus on sense of call. Through this interview, you and the CPM will gain clarity on your vocational discernment and next steps.

• Complete Forms 5C and 5D

These forms document the CPM's interview with the individual, set expectations, and form a covenant with the individual under care.

• Presbytery examination on sense of call

When the Inquirer phase has been successfully completed, the CPM will present you to presbytery for examination on your sense of call and advancement to the Candidacy phase.

The Candidacy Phase

• Complete all coursework

Once you have completed your coursework, have your educational institution send an official transcript to the CPM.

• Complete your senior ordination exams

The remaining four standard examinations (exegesis, theological competence, worship/sacraments, and polity) should be completed during your candidacy and after you have passed the requisite coursework.

• Complete Clinical Pastoral Education

Clinical pastoral education (CPE) strengthens the individual's pastoral skills while cultivating habits of self-reflection and self-supervision. One unit must be completed through an accredited program (CPSP or ACPE).

• Complete a pastoral internship and other field education

You should complete field education through your graduate institution, which will require reflection and supervisory evaluations.

• Update your statement of faith

Revise your statement of faith to be ready for examination by the CPM and Presbytery. This can be used on your Personal Discernment Profile (PDP) when seeking a call.

• Send a sermon manuscript and audio or video recording to the CPM

This helps document and verify that you have a working competency with preaching, both in preparing the sermon and in delivering it effectively.

• Meet with the CPM for your certification interview

At this meeting, the CPM will explore both your sense of call and preparation. This interview certifies that you have met the requirements of the preparation process and attests that you have successfully completed all requirements, satisfactorily demonstrate the competencies and professional standards expected of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

• Final Presbytery examination

This final examination by the Presbytery formally certifies you ready to receive a call. Presbyters can ask questions on both your sense of call and statement of faith, though questions on the latter will be more common.

• Complete Form 6

This form certifies the candidate and allows them to seek a call in other Presbyteries.



Process at a glance

Commissioned Ruling Elder and Commissioned Lay Pastor

Updated November 2023

This document can illuminate the journey to commissioning as a ruling elder or lay pastor. This is an aid only. Please consult the CPM policies and procedures manual available on the Presbytery website for the most accurate information on the process.

Applying for the Process

- **Read the Handbook for Preparation of Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs) and Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLPS)**

This document provides insight on the preparation process. This will be the primary reference for your discernment and preparation process as you work with the CPM.

- **Complete an application**

Available on baltimorepresbytery.org. For those pursuing a limited commission in their home church, the Session needs to meet with Commission on Ministry at this point.

- **Meet with the Session of your congregation**

On the final pages of your application packet, the Session will certify that they have examined you and endorse your entrance into the CRE or CLP discernment and preparation process. You should not have this meeting until the Session has been able to speak with a Presbytery and/or Commission on Ministry representative.

- **Connect with your Session liaison**

The Session will assign you a congregational liaison who will help facilitate support, connection, and care for you while in the process.

- **Meet with the CPM**

At your first meeting with the CPM, the commission will get to know you, review your application, discuss your reflection questions, and enroll you under care in one of two tracks: the limited commission (CRE) track or the commissioned pastor (CLP) track.

- **Initiate a background check**

The CPM conducts a background check (including criminal and motor vehicle) for all enrolling in the process. The cost is covered by CPM.

- **Enrollment by the CPM**

You will be enrolled under care, which establishes a formal relationship with the commission and preparation process.

The Preparation Phase

- **Define a course of preparation**

The CPM will set a course of preparation that is applicable to the type of commission you are seeking.

- **Connect with your CPM liaison**

The CPM assigns every individual under care at least one liaison who will help guide and support you through the discernment and preparation process. They serve as a primary point of contact with the CPM. You should plan on speaking to your liaison on a regular basis (often once a quarter).

- **Schedule a Vocational and Psychological Assessment (CLPs only)**

Your vocational and psychological assessment provides deeper insight to support discernment and preparation for vocational ministry. The CPM covers one third of this cost, with the remainder of the fee left to you and your congregation.

- **Annual Consultations (CLPs only)**

Every year in the late summer or early fall, every person under care of the Presbytery will meet with the CPM to reflect on their sense of call, preparation, and overall journey. A standard evaluation form (Form 3) documents your progress on the goals set the year prior.

The individual's liaison should complete Form 4 in consultation with the commission. This form outlines specific goals for the inquirer or candidate that they should meet in the coming year.

- **Complete reflection assignments**

All individuals will need to complete a spiritual autobiography that explores your sense of call and faith journey. CLPs are required to complete an additional reflection on anti-racism after attending the Dismantling Racism training.

- **Complete Presbytery training**

The Presbytery requires Healthy Boundaries and Dismantling Racism training for all individuals under care. These are offered on a semi-regular basis.



- **Prepare a statement of faith**

Your statement of faith will be required for commissioning by the Presbytery once your preparation is complete.

- **Complete a pastoral internship or other field education (CLPs only)**

If required, you should complete field education with a Minister of Word and Sacrament, who will facilitate reflection and complete supervisory evaluations.

- **Send a sermon manuscript and audio or video recording (CLPs only)**

This helps document and verify that you have a working competency with preaching, both in preparing the sermon and in delivering it effectively.

- **Meet with the CPM for your certification interview**

At this meeting, the CPM will explore both your sense of call and preparation. This interview certifies that you have met the requirements of the preparation process and satisfactorily demonstrate the competencies and professional standards expected of CREs and CLPs in the Presbytery of Baltimore.

- **Notify the Commission on Ministry**

The CPM will notify the Commission on Ministry that you are prepared for examination. When the COM has identified the ministry context to which you are seeking commissioning, your presbytery examination will be scheduled, usually at the next stated meeting.

- **Attend a Presbytery meeting to be examined and commissioned**

This final examination by the Presbytery formally approves you for commissioned service. You will be examined on your preparedness and sense of call, and the COM will present your ministry context to the Presbytery. The Presbytery will also elect an administrative commission to perform the actual commissioning during a worship service that you plan.